

Dear Judge Conley,

It's been over a year since my arrest and I've spent the interim on reflection. It's paid off. I have driven my family into the eye of the storm. I feel like a cloud casts a shadow of humiliation, guilt, and regret from my every step. It's incredibly difficult to know they're suffering the consequences of my own actions.

I address this letter to you to establish just how this came to be. I also hope I can paint a more accurate picture of the man I want to be, I loath who I am and the addiction that was defining me. I'll scope out what I've done to change that. The journey, although painful, has not been in vain. I've learned about family, love, and relationships. I've acknowledged the deceit of addiction and turpitude of child porn. I've been reminded of what I learnt in Sunday School; the importance of values and moral code on society. Ultimately I've discovered how much I need help.

The scariest part of my crime is how I broke a sacred trust with my family. Nothing about this fit my character. In the beginning I believed that was a mitigating factor which was very inconsiderate. It's because of my "character" I was in a position of trust and could do this. I knew what I did was wrong and yet I did it. I wasn't healthy. I was in denial. I needed help. Coming to terms with this has been a humbling experience. Unfortunately as this has brought me up it's drag my family down.

She lost her only son. I can no longer look after her. She's disabled and needed me. I hurt my mom and she blames herself, as if she could've known when I was so discreet with my addiction. As far as I'm concerned she did everything right. She taught me masturbating was wrong. She brought me to church where I learnt about becoming a "slave to the flesh". I humiliated and hurt her. She's had to spend considerable time offering my sister (Stacey) consolation or what I put them through.

My sister and I were very close. She was a sister, parent, and best friend all-in-one. That's priceless. Given our relationship this has been hardest on her. She's a very strong woman and has fought anxiety her entire life. This has exacerbated her struggle. I know it's crippling. For me, her brother, to have hurt her child. I really can't express how bad I feel for how I've hurt her. She meant and means so much to me.

I've hurt so many people. My nephew Austin and I always felt like brothers (one year apart). My nephew Caleb and I were inseparable. He looked up to me. I've been an incredibly poor influence with my crimes. It comes with deep regret and desire to make a reversal. He already struggles with ADHD and impulsivity. Sharing disabilities is part of the reason we connected so well. This brings me to the center of this letter; my niece, Carly. How I treated her was inhumane. I never let a more compassionate kid. She drew me a card when I got cancer that nearly made me cry. It was a stick figure depiction of her crying.

She was such a good kid and I am so sorry for what I did. I want it to be known how great my family was. Every night I call home hoping and praying to hear they're better and have forgiven me. I hope once the case is over that my sister will let me call her and apologize and beg her forgiveness and my brother-in-law's and eventually my nephews and niece. I want them to know how sorry I am and how much I miss them.

Please know that I am not going to waste these next years in prison. While in jail I have spent most of my time reading great literature and journaling. I am seeing the world and myself with different eyes. In many ways I am thankful to have been caught, to start attending, and to deal with my demons. I hate that it has come to this but I am glad that I can now get help and in time I hope my family will forgive and even one day be proud of me.

Respectfully,
Matthew Howard